

200,000. It's now the smallest it's been since John Kennedy was President, and as a percentage of our civilian work force, it's the smallest it's been since 1933. The Democrats did that. We did it by treating our Federal employees humanely, giving them good retirement and severance packages. We did it by increasing the productivity of the fine Federal employees that are left. We reduced the burden of big Government. We're eliminating 16,000 pages of Federal regulation. Those were Democratic reforms.

This is not about the problems of big Government. They want to strip the National Government of its ability to protect and advance the interests of the elderly and the children and the disabled people of this country. That is what is going on here.

[The next questioner asked the President what he had done to give children a better education and brighter future.]

The President. To answer your question in the way you posed it, the most important thing we have done is to give this country a comprehensive education policy focused not only on greater educational opportunities but on higher standards and higher quality education. And I'd like to give you some specific examples.

We have increased the number of our young people in Head Start programs by tens of thousands. For the public schools, we have written into law the national education goals and said to every State we will give you extra help if you will commit to try to reach these goals and if you will commit to a system which holds you accountable so that we can see whether you're making progress toward reaching these goals. We will give you extra help, and we will give special help to districts that are poor or that have a lot of poor children, but we all have to have the same high standards and we all have to be willing to be held accountable.

For young people who aren't going to college, we have launched a national school-to-work program to help every State give young people good training so they can get good jobs even if they don't have 4-year college degrees. Then, for young people who are going to college, we've launched a new direct student loan program that has lower cost col-

lege loans available to more kids with better terms of repayment.

One of the most successful things we've done—I've talked about it a lot in Florida—we have dramatically increased the number of student loans and the possibility of earning money through college through our national service program, AmeriCorps. Every single one of those things is at risk in the Republican budget, and I am fighting for every single one of them.

But we have a comprehensive education strategy based on national standards and grassroots reforms and more opportunity. That is what I think we ought to be pushing for. No company in the world and no country in the world would go into the 21st century by cutting its investment in education and technology and research. But this budget cuts our investment in education, technology, and research. It is a prescription for bad economics. That's the other thing I want to say to people: This Republican budget is not just bad in human terms, it's going to be bad for the economy. It will undermine the economic strategy that we have pursued that has given us the world's strongest economy again, and I want you to stick with us on the education issue.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 10:17 a.m. from the Dempsey Thomas Film Studio in Little Rock, AR, to the convention meeting in Miami Beach, FL. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Lawton Chiles and Lt. Gov. Buddy MacKay of Florida, and President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti.

Statement on the Nomination of Kweisi Mfume as Chairman of the NAACP

December 10, 1995

I was delighted to hear about the nomination of Representative Kweisi Mfume to the leadership of the NAACP. In his distinguished career as the Representative of Baltimore's 7th District, Congressman Mfume has been an outspoken advocate for working Americans, an articulate voice on race relations and a tireless fighter against crime. His was a voice in the Congress that sought not to be divisive but to find common ground

on a wide spectrum of issues. I am disappointed that I will lose his support in the Congress, but I know that he will continue to provide me with wise counsel in his new role. He is a superb choice to lead the NAACP at this juncture, which for so many years has been an extraordinary champion of civil rights. I wish him all the best.

Remarks at "Christmas in Washington"

December 10, 1995

Thank you. Thank you, Kelsey. I'd like to thank all the cast of "Frazier," Peri and Jane and John and David, for the wonderful job they did tonight; Gloria Estefan, Clint Black, Al Green, Dawn Upshaw, the Naval Academy Glee Club; makes you proud to be Commander in Chief—[laughter]—the U.S. Army Band's Herald Trumpets, also do; the magnificent Eastern High School Chorus, and of course, Ian Frazier and the "Christmas in Washington" Orchestra, for the magnificent music all of you have given us. Let's give them a great hand. [Applause]

Every year, Hillary and Chelsea and I really look forward to this wonderful "Christmas in Washington" evening. Besides getting us into the holiday spirit, it also gives us the opportunity to recognize one of our country's preeminent health care facilities, the Children's National Medical Center right here in Washington. As always, Christmas is a time for us to reflect on our good fortune in the past year. This Christmas, I have much to be grateful for. But among the things I am most grateful for is the way the people all around the world still look at our beloved land.

Recently, I returned from Europe where this was brought home to me ever more than before. People see America as a nation graced by God with peace and prosperity, a land of fundamental fairness and great freedom. And even though it sometimes imposes extra burdens on us, it is wonderful to know that people the world over trust us to work with them to achieve and share the blessings of peace.

So at Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of a homeless child whose only shelter was

the straw of a manger, but who grew up to become the Prince of Peace, let us remember that He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." And let us ask the blessings of peace this Christmas for everyone, from the Middle East to Northern Ireland, to Bosnia, and not only for the children there but, of course, for our troops as well. And let us also as Americans resolve, each of us, to do what we can to be peacemakers, not only to bring peace and reconciliation around the world but also to the most difficult neighborhoods of our own Nation, to every child who deserves to be free from violence and full of hope. That is our prayer for this Christmas.

Hillary and Chelsea and I offer this wish of our season to all of you and to all Americans everywhere. Peace on Earth, goodwill toward men. Merry Christmas, and God bless you all.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at 6:20 p.m. at the National Building Museum for broadcast at 10 p.m. on December 13. In his remarks, he referred to Kelsey Grammer, David Hyde Pierce, Peri Gilpin, Jane Leeves, and John Mahoney, cast members of the TV show "Frazier;" and entertainers Gloria Estefan, Clint Black, Al Green, Dawn Upshaw, and Ian Frazier.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Shimon Peres of Israel

December 11, 1995

The President. Good morning everyone. It's a pleasure and an honor to have the Prime Minister here. We're about to start our talks. And as you know, after we have those talks, we will have a press conference, and we'll be available for your questions. But I'm very much looking forward to continuing our work on the peace process and continuing our strong partnership.

Q. Will you, Mr. President, become actively involved in an Israeli-Syrian track?

The President. Well, we're going to—let us have our talk, and I'll be glad to answer the questions after we finish our visit.

Thank you.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]